787 776 been taken away by the local authorities and sent to the Indians' Affairs Office in San Cristobal.

Life Cycle

• 842 183 *Pregnancy and Childbirth*

The strongest desire of every Tzeltal couple is to create a numerous family, preferably 843 [833] boys. The relationship between sexual intercourse and pregnancy is well understood among the Indians. They know that pregnancy lasts nine months and they keep a 843 789 good count of it. On the other hand, there are ideas about the possibility of the woman being influenced by old men or "the owners of the nagual," who can interrupt pregnancy and change the fetus from one woman to another. This is why a woman who thinks she is pregnant for three or four months suddenly realizes that she carries nothing any more, while another one, maybe her neighbor, finds herself in advanced pregnancy, giving birth a few months later. It is to be stressed, however, that these changes can take place only among married women.

844 [81] In conservative villages (Tenejapa, Oxchuc, Cancuc) there is no professional midwife. Children are delivered by the oldest women in the neighborhood.

[757] [237] When labor begins, the first thing is to give the mother a beverage made of powdered opossum tail dissolved in boiling water. It is very common for Indians to have a dry tail hanging next the fireplace. The woman kneels at labor, facing the midwife. The husband's belt or the woman's rebozo is tied very tightly around the upper part of the abdomen to prevent the child from "going up again." The mother can also help herself by seizing a rope tied to the roof, or taking firm hold of any post of the house. The umbilical cord is chopped with a machete or cut with scissors, supported on an [241] [824] ear of corn. This ear is afterwards used as seed and is considered very fertile.

[757] When labor has finished, the mother is given another hot beverage of pepper,

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844 [157] [842] cloves, and corncake, to keep her "warm and fertile." The placenta can be burned, thrown to the dogs, or deeply buried in case the mother does not want another pregnancy soon. The umbilical cord is put under [189] a three-stone fireplace if the baby is a girl, on top of a tree if it is a boy so that he may become brave and agile when adult.

846 515 A few hours after childbirth, at the latest the next day, both mother and child take a temascal (steam bath). Some women stay in the temascal until they feel completely recovered.

Childhood and Adolescence

789 774 During the first weeks of life, children are in danger of losing their souls because their inexperience makes them an easy prey to the naguales and bad spirits who wander around. As protection, mothers place a small [237] piece of beeswax at the back of the child's head or tie, as a bracelet, a red or blue thread around the wrist. If none of these precautions are taken, the mother has to cover with branches the paths her child walks, so that his soul can easily find its way in case he loses it.

789 852 774 Because of all these dangers, fathers always try to perform the ceremony of "seed the soul of the child" as soon as possible. It [553] is during this ceremony that the child is given a name, later confirmed according to [608] Catholic ritual at the ceremonial center. A very important aspect of the ceremony is selection of the godparents.

753 776 [888] *Sickness and Death*

Most sicknesses come from infection or malnutrition. To the natives, however, illnesses have a supernatural cause and are ascribed either to the anger of gods and spirits or to old people who have a nagual or who can throw a spell. The most frequent explanation is that naguales or supernatural beings are acting against people. They can adopt human or animal form or appear as

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242 *Soil characteristics.* The potential productivity of flat irrigated lands is evaluated on the basis of two criteria: color of the soil and consistency of the soil. The preferred land for cultivation is the black loam mixed with some sand, (*ʔihk'al hiʔiletik lum*). The better, quicker growing corn seed is planted here. These very productive soils are called "hot" [822] [843] [842] lands (*k'ilin lum*). (Heat is associated with fertility in both lands and people: a pregnant woman and her husband are considered to be in a state of heat, and the contrast state of being cold is attributed to someone who is sterile.) The red (*tzab'alum*) yellow (*k'analum*), and white soils (*sak lum*) are poorer soils and the slower seed is planted here. These soils are considered "cold" (*sik*) and are thought to be "tired."

The loss of soil productivity is attributed either to the loss of the soul of [774] the crop or to the fact that the soil gets "tired." Farmers have noticed that in the first five years of planting in Tulanca, the ejido land grant, the soil was "hot" and gave good crops. When this productivity was lost, people said the soul of the crop left. It is considered dangerous to start crops in the lower lands of hot country because when the location of crops is changed, the soul leaves its original residence. The notion of crop soul loss does not conflict with the awareness of natural causes of soil productivity. Fields are left fallow for four or five years when productivity diminishes and the soil is "tired." The irrigated lands are in continuous use because there is some replenishment of fertility with the overflow of the ditch waters. Cattle fertilizers are used sporadically. Those who have many head of [233] cattle construct corrals into which they herd the cattle each night. The location of the corral is changed yearly. Corn and beans are then planted in [598] the old corral with superior results. The dozen or so corrals in the town [476] are owned and worked cooperatively by extended families and are referred [551] to by the Indian patronyms—for example, *skoral Linetik* (corral of the Lins) or *skoral Čailetik* (corral of the Čailes). The one attempt to use [177] commercial fertilizers provided by the Ejido Bank proved a technical success but an administrative failure (chapter 3). Indians noted the increased yields, but none have attempted to purchase fertilizers.

Soil consistency is evaluated on the basis of how easy it is to work. Wet, sticky, or clayey soil (*ʔučilium*) and stony soil (*ʔelilum*) are least desirable. Sandy soil is easier to work, but soil productivity depends on a loam

7: Nash E-5 (1957-1967) 1970

NV9 Tzeltal NV9
Amatenango del Valle

Behavior Defined in the Family

Socialization in the family provides the individual with the idiom for behaving in the wider community. The basic principles ordering behavior are respect and obedience toward those who are older, and care for those who are younger. Obedience, expressed by the verb *č'un* which means both to believe (or to be gullible) and to obey, is instilled by cultivating a sense of fear and shame. Fear is communicated by the parent to the child by invoking evil spirits and by the threat or use of punishment, especially whipping with a leather strap. Shame is aroused by ridicule, jeering, and chastising. A good child is a quiet child; questioning is discouraged either by refusing to answer the child or by telling him to keep quiet. The negative aspect of good behavior is stressed. Significantly, the phrase "Behave yourself!" is translated into Spanish as "Don't do anything!" Good behavior is not rewarded either by praise or by gifts. The only public demonstration of affection toward children I have seen is by grandparents toward grandchildren: an elder might give his sweet roll at a ceremony to his grandchild and even fondle him. Parents show affection to youngsters under three years of age, although the last child may be coddled somewhat longer. Mothers and young children show intimacy and affection in delousing each other or combing each others' hair. Kissing is not a sign of intimacy but of formal respect in ceremonies.

Beliefs concerning conception show awareness of both the male and the female contribution to the fetus. The man's sperm (*snal*) enters the womb, *yo?tan*, (also the word for heart) and mixes with the woman's flow, to bring about conception. The blood of a child is believed to come from its mother and the skin, bones, and brains from the father. During pregnancy, the father must have intercourse with his wife because his sperm nourishes the fetus. This continues right up to the birth of the child. Men too are believed to have wombs, and some men have trouble with "dropped wombs" caused by lifting heavy burdens.

The only people in attendance at the birth of a child are the women of the immediate household, the mother of the woman giving birth if she is not a part of the houshold, and the midwife. Children are kept out of the